**Washington State county marriages, 1878-1950**

**Wiki link name**

Washington Vital Records

**Collection Time Period**

The time period covered by this collection includes the dates 1878-1950.

**Collection History**

County officials began recording marriages in 1853 or soon after the counties were organized. Information was filled in by the minister, priest or official performing the marriage ceremony and then returned to the county auditor of the county in which the marriage took place. Statewide registration of marriages began in 1968.

**How to Use the Collection**

Marriage records are the best source for proving the date and place of marriage. Marriage records legalize marital relationships and validate a wife’s legal claim to property. Use the marriage as the basis for compiling a family group. Use the birth date or age and birthplace of each partner to find a couple's birth records and parents' names. Use the place of residence to search for other records that may have information on parents and siblings. The name of the officiator can be a clue to their religion or area of residence in the county. However, ministers may have reported marriages performed in other counties.

**Collection Content**

Key genealogical facts that may be found in the marriage records are:

* Names of bride and groom
* Residences
* Date and place of marriage
* Ages of bride and groom (on marriage return)
* Places of birth (on marriage return)
* Occupation (on marriage return)
* Names of parents (on marriage return)
* Names of witnesses
* Name of person performing the marriage

**Collection Description**

This collection contains marriage returns, certificates and a few affidavits depending on the county. Most of the records are pre-printed forms filled in by hand or typewritten. Some of the certificates are handwritten entries recorded in registers.

**Collection Reliability**

County marriage records are considered a reliable source in family history research because they contain a record of an event usually registered very near the time the event occurred. The reliability, of course, depends on the accuracy of the informant.

**Bibliographic Information**

County auditor of the county in which the marriage took place. Marriage records, 1878-1950. Washington State Archives, Olympia, Washington.

**Author statement**

Sherrie Clement, Cataloging